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SUBJECT: INITIAL RESULTS OF A USG-FUNDED TIP PROJECT

11. (U) Summary: The Department of State (PRM) funded a USD 155,000 International Organization for Migration (IOM) project to combat trafficking in the northeastern province of Quang Ninh. The project provides considerable training in preventing trafficking, HIV prevention and public health, in addition to vocational training in job skills relevant to the growing tourism infrastructure in the province. A recent Embassy visit to Quang Ninh showed initial encouraging results from the project activities. The second course has begun, and all 25 participants of the first course have now been placed in local hotels and restaurants practicing their job skills. According to local officials, the post-internship employment rate could be high, representing a giant leap for a group of vulnerable women who, before the project began, had no hope at all. End Summary.

PROJECT AND PROVINCE BACKGROUND

12. (U) Despite the GVN's significant efforts to address its emerging trafficking problem, trafficking in persons, especially from the project province of Quang Ninh to China continues to be a major issue. The root causes of trafficking are often perceived as poverty, lack of education, and, in Vietnam, social pressure brought on by the transition from a planned to a market economy. According to the Quang Ninh Women's Union, the province has numerous vocational training needs, especially for "people in difficult circumstances" such as victims of trafficking, prostitutes, and disadvantaged street children. The USD 155,000 IOM counter-trafficking project not only aims at addressing this need, but also helps respond to the province's ever-growing appetite for workers with restaurant and hotel skills for the tourist industry.

13. (U) The project targets trafficking survivors, but to avoid stigmatizing the survivors by making them easily identifiable through participation in the project, at least half of the participants are women identified by local authorities and Women's Unions as being at high risk for trafficking rather than survivors of actual trafficking incidents. Some categories falling under the "high risk" designation are: widows; single mothers; domestic abuse victims; daughters or husbands of convicted felons; and, recovering substance abusers or their wives/children. Teaching life skills and providing psychosocial counseling to trafficking survivors and vulnerable women is at least as important as providing vocational skills, according to IOM and project staff.

INITIAL PROMISING RESULTS

14. (U) According to the Quang Ninh Provincial Women's Union and IOM, there have been two "Asian Cooking" courses under the project, one almost completed, one ongoing, for 50 disadvantaged and trafficked women from within the province. In the training courses the women learn cooking, English, job seeking and interviewing skills, and various life skills to prepare them for reintegration into society. All 25 participants in the first course have been placed in various hotels and restaurants in Quang Ninh and Hanoi for internships, and some have already secured onward jobs. Embassy staff recently visited a restaurant in Ha Long City where three of the participants were working to improve their skills. According to local officials and IOM, the post internship employment rate has the potential to be high for these women, though they will need considerable follow-up attention.

15. (U) Comment: Given Quang Ninh's proximity to the Chinese border, trafficking will continue to be a persistent problem due to the low level of awareness and lack of vocational skills in vulnerable populations. While the GVN's resources to combat trafficking are limited, assistance such as the IOM protection/reintegration project to equip the women with job skills reduces the pressure to seek employment in China and plays a vital part in the country's entire anti-trafficking effort. The project is relatively expensive at USD 3,000 per trainee, but the impact on the trainees appears to be significant, and more

durable than any other prevention/protection intervention we have seen in Vietnam to date. We recommend working with IOM to expand this model in Quang Ninh as well as other areas that have both high tourist demand and serious trafficking problems, such as the northwest mountain areas and the Mekong Delta towns of Can Tho and Chau Doc. End Comment.

MARINE